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ABSTRACT

This paper starts from the assumption that the typical grading systems used by most American secondary schools need overhauling and discusses the implementation of an alternative student evaluation system that is individualized, noncompetitive, and nonpunitive. Most of the paper describes a performance-based, criterion-referenced student evaluation system developed at Concord High School in Wilmington, Delaware. The Concord system employs formative evaluation, which results in interim progress reports of a student's work in each subject area, and summative evaluation, which summarizes a student's work for an entire course and evaluates his level of achievement. Both the formative and summative evaluations evaluate students on an individual, noncompetitive basis, without using traditional grades, grade point averages, or class rankings. Samples of both the formative and summative evaluation report forms developed at Concord are included. The author emphasizes the importance of contacting college admissions officers before implementing an alternative student evaluation system; he reports that 90 percent of the colleges surveyed indicated their acceptance of the new Concord system. (JG)

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DEVELOPING PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Dr. William J. Bailey

It seems both logical and humane that educators should be emphasizing what students have learned, rather than what they have not learned compared to other students. The traditional marking system "fails" because it is punitive for the majority of students (we can't all get A's and B's). It is inadequate in reporting the kinds of learning experiences students in modern high schools are having. As a result, new systems must be devised which will be positive, accurate, and descriptive of the work that has been accomplished.

This article starts from the assumption that readers are in agreement that the typical grading systems employed by most secondary schools in the country need overhauling and consequently there will be no pontifications about the evils of grades. What will be discussed is an example of one alternative student evaluation system, the change process, and what the college admissions people are saying about these changes.

The kind of evaluation system described in the following pages takes into consideration the emphasis being placed on the individual learner, the de-emphasis placed on time as a limitation to learning, and the importance of precise objectives dealing with relevant material. It is performance based and criterion referenced. One such system is being developed at Concord High School, Wilmington, Delaware.

EA 007 870

Any system of evaluation should be based on values that are important to the organization. The assumptions on which this particular system is based are somewhat universal and are listed below:

1. Learning should be evaluated. Taxpayers, parents, and students deserve to know what progress is being made, and the educational system needs to know its efficiency.

2. An evaluation system does not have to be competitive vis-'a-vis student vs. student. In a sense, the only competition necessary is the student competing with the course objectives.

3. The best kinds of motivations are intrinsic. An atmosphere must prevail in which students are motivated to learn as opposed to working for grades. A positive, self-motivating and mentally healthy environment will in fact result from a non-competitive evaluation system.

4. Evaluations should be individualistic. Since each individual learns at different rates and in different ways and the curriculum has been designed to account for those differences, an evaluation of student progress must be appropriate to his needs.

5. Evaluation should be as specific as possible and based on actual performance.

6. Schools have an obligation to share a student's progress with interested parties at the students' request.

There are seven basic steps to take to implement the six (6) listed assumptions. They are as follows:

1. Decide the content to be learned in general, topical terms.
2. Write concepts for the major topics to be learned.
3. State these concepts in performance objectives.
4. Plan the learning activities that will allow the learner to achieve the stated objectives, allowing for alternative paths.
5. Design the assessment tasks for major activities and objectives. These are usually in the form of tests which are teacher designed but have agreement with the department, team, or administration.
6. Describe the student's performance information on report forms that relate:
    A. FORMATIVE EVALUATION (interim progress reports)
    B. SUMMATIVE EVALUATION (final achievement level)
7. Derive a procedure to evaluate the course based on the achievement of the students.

Formative

Frequent formative evaluation tests and other appraisals will provide an indication of the pace and motivation of the students. They should also give an indication of whether or not the student is making the necessary effort at the appropriate time. The appropriate use of these evaluations will help to ensure that each set of learning tasks is sufficiently learned before subsequent learning tasks are started. A periodic check every nine weeks or less can be made and the results are forwarded to parents. Each department should be responsible for developing their own formative evaluations and the necessary forms to record same, but they should all be descriptive in nature. An example is included.

LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENT
PHASE IV

_____ will receive Proficiency Sufficiency

No Credit Incomplete No Grade for the marking period ending _____

The following information is provided to indicate achievement and progress.

Reading Level (Phase IV Range: 160-170+)

Standardized Reading Test (ETS Co-Op Test)
First Test Score: _____ Date _____ Current Test Score ____ Date____

Writing evaluated according to phase expectations

Paragraph: Superior Satisfactory Unsatisfactory
Multi-paragraph paper: Superior Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Reading Contract: _____ Completed _____ Not Completed

Continuous Progress Requirements

Tasks accepted: ___ of 2 expected

Specific Reading Skills

	Advanced Skills	Basic Skills
Comprehension of Facts.		

Specific Thought Skills

Synthesis of the following elements supporting theme:

	Superior	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Character.			
Figurative Language			
Point of View.			
Symbol.			
Setting.			
Style.			
Plot Structure.			

Current Phase Placement I II III IV V
Phase Placement for Next Marking Period I II III IV V
Attendance: Absent from class of 23 days

Student Responsibility

	Superior	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Brings necessary materials to class.			
Reads assigned materials.			
Completes assignments.			
Works without supervision.			
Participates in small group discussions.			

Parent Comments:

If you wish to respond to this evaluation, please write comments on reverse side and return this to the Language Arts Department or call for an appointment.

5 _____
Teacher

Summative

The other part of the evaluation system involves the final recording of achievement referred to as the summative evaluation. The summative evaluation is a summary of the work for the entire course, a recording of the achievement level which includes a coding system for college transcripts, credit awarded, and general comments that would be pertinent regarding the individual student, along with recommendations for future work in this area. An example is included.

The summative evaluation can be designed to award credit for achievement on two levels. In most cases the student can choose the level at which he or she operates. The basic achievement level, referred to here as "sufficiency", denotes that the student has achieved or acquired the necessary skills, concepts, or attitudes that meet course standards. This sufficiency level should be available and attainable to all students given proper placement and normal time allotments, although some may take longer than others. If a student does not achieve this level and drops the course, he receives no credit. A second level referred to here as "proficiency", signifies a demonstration of unusual interest, motivation, skills, knowledge, or advanced concepts. This proficiency level should be available and attainable for the majority of the students given (1) the appropriate mode of instruction (materials and teacher); (2) unlimited time; (3) adequate motivation. Proficiency can be structured to be somewhat discriminating because these conditions may be difficult to meet.

A third category of even higher performance could be created which might be referred to as "mastery". This is an arrangement which starts after or along with the proficiency achievement level but in addition requires that the student contracts to be of service to the discipline. This mastery status should be limited to one or

SUMMATIVE REPORT - SCIENCE II, PHASE 2H S392,

NAME _____

FINAL EVALUATION: Sufficiency Proficiency No credit Incomplete

CREDIT: Mastery

1. Communications _____

Measurement

2. Fundamental Quantities ____
3. Dimensional Analysis _____
4. Metric System _____
5. Significant Figures _____
6. Exponential Notation _____
7. Slide Rule _____

Motion

8. Graphing _____
9. Average Speed _____
10. Instantaneous Speed _____
11. Aristotle & Galileo _____
12. Free Fall _____
13. Vectors _____
14. Newton's Laws _____
15. Superposition Principle ___

Motion in the Heavens

16. Naked Eye Astronomy _____
17. Early Greek View _____
18. Copernicus-Brahae _____
19. Kepler _____
20. Galileo _____
21. Universal Gravitation _____

Conservation Laws

22. Mass _____
23. Momentum _____
24. Work-Energy _____
25. Heat _____

Development of a Molecular Model

26. Energy of Reaction _____
27. Properties of Gases _____
28. Avogadro's Hypothesis _____
29. Symbols & Formulas _____
30. The Mole _____
31. Gas Laws _____
32. Molar Volume _____

Lab reports: ___no complete ___no incomplete

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS:

Student Initiative (Requests Help)

Seldom	Occasionally	Usually	Frequently

Evenness of Performance:

Erratic	Uneven	Fairly even	Consistent

Attitude:

Seldom Cooperates	Cooperative	Usually Cooperative	Always Cooperative

Personal Responsibility:

Often refuses	Partially accepts	Usually accepts	Always accepts fully

TEACHER COMMENTS:

_____
Teacher Signature

two courses per student per year. Examples of possible mastery service are as follows:

1) Student aide to a teacher
2) Laboratory assistant
3) Tutoring
4) Special research projects
5) Writing learning packets, producing a.v. aids, etc.
6) Certain kinds of individual study.

The traditional transcript can be used for college admission purposes. The symbols for the coding, in this sytem (S, P, M) would be entered as were traditional grades in the past. Each student should have on file the Summative Evaluation form for each course completed. The form contains a description of the course, in terms of major concepts, and the specific achievements made by the student. The formats can vary with the department. When advisable these forms can be included with college or job applications. If necessary all of the Summative Evaluations can be sent to interested parties. However, it is more probable that only those that specifically pertain to the student's major interest are necessary. For example a student with primary interests in engineering may send the math and science reports. Of course transcripts still contain the regular test scores and faculty recommendations, but there is no grade point average or class rank with this system. If a student does not complete a course or does not achieve at the "sufficiency" level in a course for which he or she is enrolled then "No Credit" is received. This can be denoted with an N.C. on the transcript. What may be even more fair to the student is simply not to record any record of the course, unless requested to do so by the student.

When considering changing the grading system, a school would obviously follow their normal strategies for change which hopefully would include involvement with students, parents, teachers, and other interested parties. The secret to the change process in student evaluation, however, is very predominantly placed in the college admissions question. If you can change (improve) your student evaluation system and not drastically affect the colleges acceptance of those students, then you are well on the road to acceptance by parents, students and teachers! One idea is to keep only positive grades - A, B, and maybe C and attach performance criteria to each level (A, B, C) for each course. The same principle applies, but the change process may be facilitated. GPA should not be kept or the system again becomes normative and competitive.

Both formal and informal contact must be made with colleges when initiating grading changes. Surveys can be very helpful in determining the admissions offices reactions. One such survey conducted by James Terrell, Chairman of Counseling at Concord High School, Wilmington, Delaware is reported here.

The Performance Evaluation College Admissions Survey, along with a description of a performance based system, was mailed to 172 colleges.

In reply to the question, "What effect will the new evaluation system have on our graduates chances of being accepted into your college", the college Directors of Admissions responded as follows:

	% in reply group
1. No affect on chances of admission (examples of replies)	60%
	- "Sounds great"
	- "Your new evaluation system is quite thorough and won't hurt the chances of your graduates applying here."
	- "No effect"
	- "Certainly will not have a negative effect ... Your system seems superi to any others we are familiar with."

1. No affect on chances of admission (Cont'd.):

(examples of replies)

- "Your system should enable us to make better admission decisions."
- "No effect"
- "Chances will be as good as if a student were evaluated under a letter grade system."
- "We support your proposed system and anticipate no negative effect - in fact, it could have a beneficial effect."

2. Little or no effect on chances of admission (with qualifications)

	% in reply group
	30%

(examples of replies)

- "May place more reliance on the SAT scores."
- "A special admissions committee will consider your students."
- "Little effect except in the areas where the out-of-state quota is small."
- "We will process your students on an individual basis."
- "No significant effect but we may place more weight on SAT scores."
- "May slow admissions determinations, but should be adequate."

3. May have a harmful effect on chances of admission

	% in reply group
	10%

(examples of replies)

- "Large number of applications will make evaluation very difficult."
- "Adverse effect in that we look for type of student who competes with contemporaries."
- "30,000 freshmen applications a year and our out-of-state quota will make your lack of GPA and rank in class difficult for us. However, we will still consider your students for admission."

As can be seen, the preliminary results show that 90% of the colleges responding indicate that the new evaluation system will have little or no effect on the students chances of admission. Counselors will have to work closely with the schools which are making changes since there will be difficulties with the new system. One naturally avoids penalizing students, but some will feel they are at a disadvantage if the school is using alternative systems. Many colleges, as well as many high schools, are developing alternative ways to evaluate students. The establishment of individualized instruction, behavioral objectives, and alternative learning patterns dictate a change in evaluative practices. All systems have weaknesses, but basing grades on positive attributes seems to be worth the effort of change.